Beijing-Lhasa train

1062. SHRIMATI JAYA BACHCHAN : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Beijing—Lhasa train started running in early July, 2006;

(b) whether Government have examined the security implications arising out of operation of this train; and

(c) if so, the results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes. The railway line from Lhasa in Tibet Autonomous Region to Golmud in Qinghai province of China was formally opened on July 1, 2006. The opening of this railway line provides rail connectivity from Beijing to Lhasa and according to Chinese reports is expected to contribute to the development of the western region of China.

(b) and (c) Government keeps a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on India's security and takes all necessary measures to safeguard it.

Introduction of e-passports

†1063. MISS ANUSUIYA UIKEY : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether e-passport is being proposed to be introduced;

(b) if so, by when the e-passport is likely to be issued; and

(c) whether the problem of racketeering is likely to be tackled by adopting the procedure of e-passport?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. It is proposed to introduce e-passports in due course after carrying out a comprehensive technical study of the matter and completing the necessary administrative and financial procedures.

(c) The Government believes that the introduction of e-passports will make the passport system much more secure.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.